

Hamilton Field, Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)
East of Casa Real
Novato
Marin County
California

HABS No. CA-2398-A

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
San Francisco, California

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HAMILTON FIELD Sewage Lift Station (Facility No. 89)

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Location: Hamilton Army Air Field
Novato, Marin County, California
Sewage Lift Station
Facility No. 89 (east of Casa Real)

U.S.G.S.: Novato, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1954 (revised 1980)
Petaluma Point, CA. Quadrangle (7.5' series), 1959 (revised 1980)
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10; A: 542100/4213620; B: 544720/4212220;
C: 542760/4210650; D: 541040/4212600

Significance:

Hamilton Field was constructed in the early 1930s as a bombardment base and headquarters of the 1st Wing of the Air Force, one of only three wings in the nation. Conceived at a time when aviation was rapidly developing, the base was assigned the mission of defending the entire western United States, a role it maintained until 1940. Hamilton also played a significant role in national defense and training during World War II, when it served as one of the three major bases of the west coast wing of the Air Transport Command's Pacific Division and parent group of the Operational Training Unit Program, a role critical to the war effort in the Pacific. Hamilton represented a significant departure from accepted Army base architectural style and layout. The carefully planned landscaping that incorporated natural oak groves, knolls, and hills; the cohesive design of all buildings in a Spanish Eclectic style; and the conception of an Army base as a planned community were creative and daring innovations. In contrast to the careful planning evident in the original layout, the temporary buildings constructed during World War II seem to have been built wherever there was room, and project a feeling of the haste and frenzy that accompanied activities during the war.

This structure was constructed along with many other buildings comprising the air freight depot on the southern end of the air field. This building provided additional sewage service to this group of World War II facilities. Building 89 is considered significant for its association with Air Force history in northern California, and with World War II actions in the Pacific Theater.

Description:

This 11-foot five-inch by 12-foot contributing structure is a frame building with composition siding and a composition shed roof. The walls are #15 felt and flexboard. There is a two-panel glass door on the southeast side and three windows on the northeast. The floor and foundation are of concrete on wood pilings. It is 138 square feet in area.

Historical Context:

Following World War I, the newly-formed Army Air Corps began planning facilities across the nation for defense purposes and for flight training and test operations. Early in 1929 the Army determined the need to establish an air field for a bombing squadron somewhere near San Francisco (*Marin Herald*, December 16, 1934; Thomason and Associates 1993). Following fierce lobbying by many Bay Area communities, the U.S. Government, lured by the guarantee of free land, chose a site in Marin County for a new air field (Bailey 1932, Ehat 1983). In 1930 President Hoover signed a bill to secure funds for construction of an air field at Marin Meadows north of San Rafael (Coady 1976; Wampler 1964:2). The Army named the base in honor of First Lieutenant Lloyd Andrews Hamilton, a World War I Air Corps aviation pilot who had distinguished himself during the war (Chappell 1981:1; Coady 1976).

The Construction Quartermaster chosen for the project was Captain Howard B. Nurse, who was responsible for determining the style of the new base (*Pacific Service* April 27, 1931:1). In the mid-1920s the Army moved away from traditional base construction toward a cohesive plan, fitting the architectural style to the climate and history of the area (Spencer 1935:13). Nurse advocated this approach and designed Hamilton as a small planned community, a "city within a city" (Nurse 1928), using a Spanish architectural style to obtain an "early California" feel.

The Army received the deed to the 927-acre parcel set aside for the base on March 17, 1932, and construction began immediately (*Novato Advance* May 28, 1932). The Army committed over \$1,400,000 for initial construction, and an additional \$3,698,302 was obtained from the Public Works Administration (Coady 1976:249; Wampler 1964). By the end of 1933, the payroll on base had reached about \$30,000 a week and close to 800 men were employed, many from the local area (Wampler 1964:9).

By August of 1934 the base was about 90 percent finished and fliers from the 316th and 367th observation squadrons were undergoing annual training at Hamilton (*San Francisco Call Bulletin* August 3, 1934). The first major transfer of men to Hamilton occurred in early December 1934 when 518 officers and men of the 7th Bombardment Group from March Field shifted to Hamilton. With the arrival of the men and their families, Hamilton contained nearly 1,000 people and was ready for business (*San Rafael Independent* November 27, 1934). Major Tinker assumed command of the base with Captain Don Hutchins acting as his executive officer. The base was dedicated May 12, 1934.

On December 31, 1934, the General Headquarters Air Force (GHQAF) was established within the Air Corps. The new air force had three wings that provided a mobile striking force capable of protecting the country from attack by sea. Hamilton was the headquarters of the 1st Wing, commanded by brigadier General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold. All appropriate units on

**HAMILTON FIELD
Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)**

HABS No. CA-2398-A Page 3

the west coast were assigned to the 1st Wing to provide Pacific Coast defenses (Wampler 1964:17).

Throughout the remainder of the 1930s the 1st Wing operated out of Hamilton with little change. Growing tensions overseas resulted in a number of changes at the base in the late 1930s, partly due to the development of the B-17, a four-engine bomber plane for which the runway facilities at Hamilton were not adequate. The 1st Wing and its bombardment squadrons were transferred to a Utah base in September of 1940, representing the end of Hamilton as a bomber base (Maniery et al. 1993:21-22).

Following departure of the bombardment squadrons, the 10th Pursuit Wing was reassigned to Hamilton (Wampler 1964:20-21). The overall mission of the wing was to provide aircraft and crews for the defense of the west coast, and train transient airmen. The pursuit groups remained at Hamilton for two years, completing defense and training missions (Wampler 1964:22).

In March 1941, the Air Corps reorganized into four continental air forces. The Fourth Air Force took on responsibility for defense of the west coast. Hamilton was assigned to the Fourth Air Force and began to take on new responsibilities as a result (Wampler 1964:22). As the Air Corps expanded to meet war demands, the need for training facilities increased. Hamilton became an important training facility, partially because of its proximity to the Pacific Ocean and the San Francisco Presidio. Hamilton also became the center of the interceptor pursuit and patrol system for the Pacific Coast (Wampler 1964:23). In addition, Hamilton was designated the official point of departure for bombardment air units bound for the Pacific and was responsible for repairing arriving aircraft and processing heavy bomber aircraft and crews for overseas combat. Additional training and outfitting of the B-24 combat crews and aircraft occurred at Hamilton (Wampler 1964:27-28).

Hamilton served as one of the three major bases of the Pacific Sector of the Air Corps Ferrying Command, later known as the Air Transport Command's (ATC's) Pacific Division. The mission of the ATC was to manage the dispatch and safe transport of Pacific-bound ferry and tactical aircraft in the vicinity of the war zones. ATC units provided transportation for freight and passengers traveling to the Pacific or returning to the States (ATC n.d.), wounded men and prisoners of war (Wampler 1964:30). A highlight on base during the war occurred in 1945, when Hamilton served as the arrival and departure point for many delegates (including President Truman) attending the first United National Conference in San Francisco.

The end of the war brought about a reorganization at Hamilton. On June 19, 1946, the Fourth Air Force moved its headquarters from San Francisco Presidio back to Hamilton, and in 1947 the ATC reorganized as the United States Air Force. The base became Hamilton Air Force Base after this change. The Fourth Air Force remained at the base until 1960 (Wampler 1964:37).

**HAMILTON FIELD
Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)**

HABS No. CA-2398-A Page 4

The primary purpose of the base during this period was air defense and training, although Hamilton continued to provide support and facilities for other military groups. During the Korean conflict, the base continued to be used as a receiving facility for homecoming wounded (Wampler 1964:42-45).

After the Korean conflict the use of Hamilton was scaled down, although the Fourth Air Force and Air-Sea Rescue units were still in residence. The diminished importance of the base in the overall air defense and training scheme, and neighborhood concerns over noise levels resulted in the excess of the base beginning in 1974, putting an end to its long air defense mission (*San Rafael Independent Journal* April 29, 1983).

Hundreds of building and support structures were constructed between 1939 and 1945 as part of war preparation and build-up. With few exceptions, these are frame buildings constructed to standard Army architectural plans. They were designed in Washington, D. C., by the Quartermaster's office staff architects and were built throughout the United States as temporary quarters and offices.

The primary method of construction for all of these buildings was frame covered with horizontal board siding; the board siding was covered with asbestos shingles in the 1950s. Foundations were constructed of concrete, although some were supported on wood piers set in concrete posts. Most had gable roofs covered with composition shingles.

Completed in June, 1945, at a cost of \$2,836.32, this facility was needed to provide support to the temporary barracks and offices constructed adjacent to the air field during the war.

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398).

Sources:

See narrative for Hamilton Field (HABS No. CA-2398). The line drawn sketch was drafted on site in 1994 by Keith Syda, scanned into a computer and drawn by Christopher MacDonald in 1995, and corrected and finalized by Claire Warshaw in 1996 (all PAR Environmental Services, Inc. staff).

See the project Field Record, roll 79, exposures 3-8. Sources cited in this individual report are listed below.

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**HAMILTON FIELD
Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)**

HABS No. CA-2398-A Page 5

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**HAMILTON FIELD
Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)**

HABS No. CA-2398-A Page 6

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Project Information:

Hamilton Army Air Field is owned by various federal entities including the Department of the Navy, Department of the Army, United States Coast Guard, and General Services Administration (GSA). The Army/GSA parcels are being excessed and sold to private developers. The Navy property is included in Base Closure and Realignment actions.

As part of the Army's undertaking, it has been determined in consultation with the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) that the excess sale will have an affect on properties at the air field, and that these properties are components of a district that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Based on consultation with the OHP and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, pursuant to 36 CFR part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f), a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was entered into by the interested parties in March 1994. The agreement stipulated that prior to excess sale the Army must contact the HABS/HAER division at the Western Regional Office of the National Park Service, San Francisco, California, to determine the appropriate level and kind of recordation for the subject properties. The MOA further stipulated that copies of the documentation be made available to the OHP and appropriate local archives designated by the OHP. This recordation has been prepared in order to meet those stipulations.

**HAMILTON FIELD
Sewage Lift Station
(Facility No. 89)**

HABS No. CA-2398-A Page 7

Text prepared by: Mary L. Maniery/Judith Marvin
Title: Historian/Architectural Historian
Affiliation: PAR ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES, INC., Sacramento, California
Date prepared: July 1995
Photography prepared by: David De Vries
Affiliation: Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California
Date of photographs: September 1994

